

BUKUSU

EAST BUKUSU LOCATION

Migratory Movements

The ancestors of the Ababukusu came from Egypt where they formerly lived. They came up the River Nile and arrived at Esamoya (Jinja). Then they saw Lake Victoria. They avoided water, as they had grown tired of it during the long river journey from Egypt. Consequently, they changed course and walked backwards through Bugishu.

They went via the northern side of Elgon and found that the surrounding district was unsuitable for cattle. Accordingly, they proceeded to Mbayi and Sirikwa, found the soil was suitable for settlement, and so lived there. Munyole and Wakoli separated from the rest at Esamoya. They crossed the lake to Kisii but later turned again and went to the territory where they now live.

When the Ababukusu left Mbayi and Sirikwa, they went to Namarare in Bugishu. Then they moved on to Solokho in Bugishu; from there they went to Ebwayi in South Teso near Tororo. After that, they came into Bukusu and lived there. Later, some of them went back to Sirikwa'.

The reasons for migrating

Egypt: Dry soil and the scarcity of water for cattle and crops. They migrated because their cattle were almost dying of thirst. In addition, they were crowded. Furthermore, the Ababukusu fought there with the Uasin Gishu Masai; they then decided to migrate. The Ababukusu came up the Nile, whereas the Abarwa (Uasin Gishu Masai) came via Ethiopia and Somalia and thence to Ngare Narok.

Esamoya: The reason for their migration from there was mosquitoes and tsetse flies. Furthermore, the water was unsuitable for cattle. The grass (pasture) was not good for cattle. The Ababukusu were extremely fond of cattle. They left the Abamasaba or Abagishu there.

Bugishu and Elgon: There were too many valleys. They therefore felt that their cattle were unable to graze properly. These valley also prevented them from seeing their enemies when coming to attack them. In addition, the grass was not good for cattle. The valleys made it difficult for them to build walls round their villages for the protection of their homes and cattle.

Mbayi and Sirikwa: The Ababukusu met there with the Abarwa (Uasin Gishu Masai) and fought with them. Then the Abarwa went farther south but the Ababukusu came this way.

Soloho and Namarare: They were together with the Abamasaba; they were their brethren. They felt that the land was not adequate for all of them and, accordingly, migrated. When the Ababukusu went to Sirikwa, the Abamasaba who remained at Jinja spread out as far as Namarare. Then when the Ababukusu came back from Sirikwa, they found that they had spread all over the place.

Ebwayi or Muyala: They migrated because of the lack of saltlicks for their cattle.

The people they met

Egypt: They spoke Olugishu and Olubukusu when they were there. They were known there as Abagishu and Ababukusu. Other Abaluyia as well as Abarwa and the Nubians were also there. Egypt was an African (Negro) country. The Ababukusu came from there along with the other Abaluyia.

Esamoya (Jinja): Uninhabited. When the Ababukusu came, the Teso were still down at Kumi.

Bugishu and Elgon: Uninhabited.

Silikwa: Uninhabited.

Namarare and Soloho: They found there the Abagishu or the Abamasaba who were in the group, which remained at Jinja when the Ababukusu migrated to Sirikwa.

Ebwayi: Uninhabited.

Food

Their chief food was milk and blood. Eleusjne meal, millet and sorghum beer, sweet potatoes, and beans were the others.

Genealogies

Maina was the leader of the migration of the Ababukusu from Egypt. Mundu was the father of Masaba who was the father of Mukisu and Muvukusu Mukusu became the ancestor of the Abagishu and Muvukusu the ancestor of the Ababukusu

Usiepo Wafula is the son of Wabomba; son Wabuke; son of Mahya; they all died here. Mahya was the son of Chetutu; son of Mukhwana; son of Kumbu; they died at Namarare. Silverio Lohati is the son of Mucheresi; son of Wanalokha son of Mucheresi they all died here. Mucheresi was the son of Mutange who died at Namarare; son of Tiongi who died at Sirikwa son of Chekwanyi who died at Sirikwa son of Luliati; son of Mangoyi; son of Samo; they too died at Sirikwa. Samo was the son of Kikayi; it is not known where he died.

Warfare

The war with the Abarwa (Uasin Gishu Masai): They fought with them in Egypt and in Sirikwa. The reason for fighting was usually cattle raids. The Abarwa also frequently raided their cattle here.

The war with the Teso: Land disputes and cattle raids, especially the former, caused this war. The Teso migrated from Uganda and came to their present country. But the Ababukusu did not want them to live there. Accordingly, there was fighting. The Teso were defeated and they “ate a dog” (made peace). As a result, the Teso now came to Iteso from Soroti in Uganda (owing to the newly established friendship). The Teso never drove the Ababukusu from their present country.

The war with the Turkana: They fought with them in Sirikwa. Fighting arose from a dispute over the crossing of a river.

The war with the Abalaku (Bok): They fought with them here because of a struggle for food in the time of famine. The Abalaku came from Sebeyi in Uganda.

Governmental System

Their ruler was an “omwami”. He ruled all the Ababukusu. Each clan had an elder called “omukasa” who assisted the ruler in the task of government. The “abakasa”

were his subordinates. The “omukasa” was the adjudicator of cases and disputes. He referred the more difficult cases to the ruler who then settled them with the assistance of the other “abakasa”. The custodian of the laws of the Ababukusu was “*omwirwatsi*”.

The people appointed all these officials, based on their personal character. The “omwami” could be dismissed for bad behaviour. The war leader was called “naitirian” (a Nandi word meaning headman). The dying ruler usually named any of his sons with good character to succeed him. The elders then installed him.

The ruler wore a skin cloak (“ekutusi”), an armband called “lichabe”, and the cowry-shell crown. He had the traditional four-legged stool. When the old ruler died, the new one inherited these insignia. The “omwami” was buried lying on his side in a cowhide.

The Ababukusu saw the Joluo for the first time during the war between the Abamarachi and the Joluo when they went to aid the former.

WEST BUKUSU

Their migratory movements, the reasons for migrating, and the people they met are the same as those of East Bukusu. The same is true of the ancestry of the sub-tribe - the only difference here being that Mundu was the father of Maina and Maina was the father of Mukishi and Muvukusu.

Daniel Samua is the son of Omito; son of Kikayi; son of Luchu; they all died here. Luchu was Bwire’s son and Bwire was the son of Musamali; they died in Bugishu. Musamali was the son of Watinda; son of Mulwale; son of Muiwani; they died at Sirikwa; son of Sionga Maye who died in Egypt. Mikail Makata is the son of Masafu; son of Tub; son of Makata; son of Mukhopi, they all died here; son of Wechuli who died at Ebwayi; son of Machi who died at Ebwayi. Simiti is the son of Masombo; son of Ambute; they died here. Ambute was the son of Musang’ali who died at Ebwayi; son of Kaboyi, son of Khisa; son of Kakuywa; they all died here. Kakuywa was the son of Sisoni who died at Namarare; son of Nasiyo who died in Bugishu.

THE ABATURA CLAN

Yusufu Matini, their chief spokesperson, said that they too came from Egypt. After leaving Egypt they went to Busia, the Mungatsi hill in Bukhayo, and thence to Munamo in North Wanga, Siginganga in Bukhayo, Mukheya in north Wanga, and then to Sirikwa. They then turned and started coming back. They went to Mirere in north Wanga and then began to spread out. They migrated from Sirikwa because the Nandi frequently stole their goats and fought with them. Their migration from the Mungatsi was due to internecine disputes and quarrels.

KIMILILI

Their Migrations

They came from Egypt and went to Tabasia and Nabiswa in Karamoja in Eastern Uganda. After that they went to Embayi near Sirikwa, and then to Sengeri near the Cherangani hills in the Rift Valley. Then they built stone walls round their villages. Then the Abyssinians drove them from there and so they came to Mbayi near Sorokho

in Bugishu. After that, they went to Namarare. Mukisu, Masaba, and Muvukusu were the ones who reached Namarare. Then Mukisu lived on the Mount Masava (Elgon), Masava lived close to the Mbale hills, and Muvusuku lived at Namarare and Bukusu. They came from Egypt on foot but crossed the river in canoes.

After leaving Namarare, Muvukusu went to Muvuya (Tororo) hill. From there he went to Ebwayi, Miala, and Mwalie. Then from there he went to Ibanda near Busia and close to the part of the lake (Victoria) in which the Sumba Island and hill are situated. Then again, they migrated from Ibanda because of the prevalence of sleeping sickness. After leaving Ibanda they went to Ebwayi, Muya, Mwalie, and Imanga. Then they moved on to Ekonyero near Kakamega and began to disperse and spread out. About that time, the Abakakaleiwa (Abanyala) separated from the Badama and the Basoga and came to Matungu. When the Ababukusu came from Egypt, they did not come up the Nile in canoes or walk along its course, they only crossed it.

Food

Eleusine, sorghum, millet, bananas, sweet potatoes, sim-sim, pumpkins, milk, blood, and meat. Their language was Luvukusu.

Genealogies

Mundu was the father of Masava, Mukishu, and Muvukusu. Masava was the eldest; he became the ancestor of the Abamasava; his younger brother, Muvukusu, became the ancestor of the Ababukusu; and the youngest, Mukishu, became the ancestor of the Abakishu. Muvukusu was the father of Mama; father of Wandera; father of Wasindamolu; father of Sioka; father of Malaba; father of Wanachiyi; father of Maheso; father of Muyemba; father of Kikayi; father of Waneroba; father of Mukoyeinulala; father of Mwalie, and so on.

The main clans

The Abamalaba, the Abamwalie, the Abakikayi, the Abasirikwa, the Abamwayi, the Abamwaya. They are descended from the sons of Muvukusu. The Abang'oma (Ngomanek) found the Ababukusu here when they came. They had come from Turgen in the Baringo District, on the other hand, the Semeket, the Kony, the Tonet (Dorobo), the Masabinjek (Sebeyi), the Bok (Walagu), and the Ngomett (Abang'oma) came along with the Ngare Narok Masai from the Uasin Gishu. They found the Avavukusu already settled. The spokesmen for Kimilili deny that they first encountered the Abang'oma at Ebwayi and that that was also where they were circumcised for the first time as the spokesmen for the Abang'oma said.

The reasons for migrating

Egypt: Wars with the Arabs in Egypt and, with the Ethiopians called "Nabibia" in Ethiopia (on the Rudolf side) and also in Sirikwa.

Tabasia: War with the Abakisira (Turkana) and the "Nabibia" Ethiopians.

Nabiswa: Again the same as above.

Embayi: Wars with the "Nabibia", the Turkana, the Ngare Narok Masai and the Marakwet Kamasia. The war between the Uasin Gishu and the Ngare Narok Masai took place when the Ababukusu had already come here. Then the Uasin Gishu Masai fled here for asylum. The rest of the migrations of the Ababukusu were generally caused by warfare.

Governmental System

They were formerly ruled by the “omwami we pokoto”. He had his subordinates (“abakasa”) at the head of every clan. The “omwami” was neither a rainmaker nor a medicine man nor a magician. He judged cases with the assistance of his “abakasa”. He never went to war; “Laitirian” was the war leader. The “omwami” was elected by the “abakasa” on the basis of his daring, courage, and good qualities. The “abakasa” usually appointed the successor from among the sons of the late “omwami” if the ruler died before nominating one, or if his nominee was not acceptable to them on the grounds of incapability. The ruler was buried in a cowhide.

He wore a leopard skin cloak, an armband, a wristband, a copper bracelet on the wrist, and the cowry-shell headdress. The new “omwami” inherited these things when the old one died.

Warfare

They fought with the Abarwa (Masai) in Sirikwa and here. They also fought with the Abakhumama (Kumam Teso) when they were still at Namarare in Bukishu, and at Mbale. The Teso fought with them when they were at Namarare, Malaba (Busia), Ebwayi, Muyemba, Buyia, and at Tororo.

- The Karamojong fought with them at Kitale and here.
- The Suk. They fought with them at Namanjala near Kitale.
- The Kisirang’i (Turkana). They attacked them here.
- The Basoga fought with them at Ibanda.
- The Badama fought with them at Buyemba, Bubuya (Tororo), and at Mulukwa or Busia.
- The Abakhaya. The Ababukusu attacked them.
- The Abasamia. The Ababukusu attacked them.
- The Abawanga under Kweyu of Mukulu.
- The Alego and the Kager Luo. The Ababukusu went to aid the Abawanga against them.
- They also fought with the Nandi on the Uasin Gishu border and with the Abakabasi. The reasons for fighting were always cattle raids and the struggle for good land.

Every sub-tribe of the Abaluyia travelled separately when people migrated from Egypt: The Ababukusu formerly smelted their own iron and manufactured their own weapons.

HISTORY OF THE BABUKUSU

The Ababukusu belong to the Bantu-speaking cluster of peoples. They came from Egypt’ via Abyssinia. The rest of the other big tribes (clans of the Abaluyia?) also originally came from there. Beyond that, nobody knows anything about the history of the Ababukusu. The history of the Ababukusu proper (therefore) began in Embayi and Sirikwa. In those days, they were known as the Babayi Basilikwa (Babayi of Silikwa).

Their migratory leader was called Maina. Their food (at that time) was meat, milk and eleusine and millet meal. They also made beer from eleusine and millet. They were pastoralists.

The first migration from Sirikwa

As the Ababukusu were still living in Sirikwa, several tribes such as the Marakwet, Elgeyo, and the Kamasia attacked them. They therefore migrated to Namalo from where they moved on to Kukumayi, and thence to Tabasia. After that, they went (back?) to Mbayi. From Mbayi they went to Namarare (North Bugishu) and thence to Murongoro i.e. present-day Buhalasi, to Silungusa, and to Bukaya. The Ababukusu lived in Bukaya for a very long time; even their leader, Maina, was circumcised there.

The Ababukusu's sojourn at Bukaya

During their sojourn in Bukaya, the population of the Ababukusu grew so much that they became much more than their original number when they were in Sirikwa. By then they were already practising cultivation, pastoralism, and even the manufacture of iron tools. Wanyanga of the Abaala (plural of Omuala?) clan was the chief blacksmith.

The Ababukusu migrate from Bukaya

As people increased and became many, they began to migrate from Bukaya. Those who stayed behind in Bukaya are today known as Bamasaba and those who migrated are called Babukusu. When the latter left Bukaya, they moved on to the Bukusu hill where they sojourned for a considerable length of time. Maina was still leading them.

Their sojourn in Bukusu (on Bukusu Hill?)

Maina, The Omukasa (ruler) of the Ababukusu, had eight wives and two sons called Wakhulunya and Namunguba. Now, it so happened that Wakhulunya fell in love with one of his father's wives. On one occasion Wakhulunya went with that woman to the Bubuya hill to pay a visit to a man called Sanjamolu of the Ababuya clan. When his father heard all this, he was very stunned. Shortly afterwards Wakhulunya came back with the woman. His father became very angry with him. Worse still, one night Wakhulunya slept in the house of that woman and was caught there.

Maina summons a council meeting

In view of all this, Omukasa Maina summoned a meeting to settle the situation, which had thus arisen from the action of his wife and son. He was concerned lest this should have a bad effect on his family. And so he beat the drum and summoned the abakasa (plural of omukasa) of the Bamasaba, Babukusu, Barwa (Kalenjin), and of the Bamia (Teso)".

When the abakasa arrived, he told them he had summoned them because Wakhulunya had taken his wife and he therefore wanted their counsel. He then asked the Omukasa of the Abamasaba called Masaba for his view and the latter told him that Wakhulunya ought to be killed because he had committed a terrible crime. Likewise, he asked the omukasa of the Abarwa called Mirikwa for his opinion and he too said that the boy should be killed.

He then asked the omukasa of the Abamia called Chetung'eng'i for his counsel and the latter told him that the boy should not be killed. Finally, he asked the abakasa of the Ababukusu whose names were Welembe of the Abamwala clan, Mung'oma of the Ababichachi clan, and Cherono of the Abafumi clan for their counsel. The three of

them told him that Wakhulunya should not be killed. Instead, they suggested that a cow be killed and a purification rite performed.

And so, Masaba, Mirikwa, and Mama the boy's father were angry because Wakhulunya would not be killed as the verdict of the Bamia and the Babukusu was against the death penalty. In the event, only the purification rite was performed.

Maina's Prophecy (Curse?)

After slaughtering the purification cow and the rites performed, Maina summoned another council meeting at which he pronounced his blessing (and curse) on the various peoples. Thus he told Masaba (of the Bamasaba) "(You) Masaba, the poles of the roof of your house will not burn, i.e. will last many years. And in the house where you will beget your child there will you also circumcise him," i.e. emphasising once more the facts of the future longevity of life and the immobility of the Bamasaba. The same blessing was pronounced on Mirikwa (of the Abarwa).

He then gave his blessing to Chetung'eng'i of the Bamia: "You, i.e. the Bamia, will be of a mobile and unsettled disposition. You will migrate from place to place and will not grow any *chisaka* (type of vegetable) in your abode; but other people will have the good fortune to grow plentiful *chisaka* in your old settlements, i.e. Chetung'eng'i. His people were, therefore, in a sense, cursed as they would not stay in any one place long enough to grow and harvest crops. On the other hand, other people would grow good crops in their former settlements, as they would find them almost virgin.

Finally, he turned to Mubukusu and told him thus: "You, i.e. Mubukusu and his people the Babukusu, will migrate from place to place. You will not even circumcise your child in the place where you will beget him, i.e. you will not stay there long enough to do so. The River Nzoia will be your (country's) boundary. However, a black snake will prevent you from trekking further afield; it (you?) will go round Mount Masaba (Elgon) and the Bukusu Hill twice." Thus, Maina ended his prophecy.

The disappearance of Maina

After Mama had pronounced his blessing, people sojourned on the Bubuya and Bukusu Hills for a short while and then Mama took his stool and disappeared with his barren wife called Nabusambia. He was never seen again, neither was his stool though people looked for him everywhere on the Bukusu Hill. After waiting for a long time, they gave up all hope of his return.

The summoning of the council meeting

Maina's son called Namungumba called a meeting of the elders (of the Ababukusu). Among those attending were Kisombe of the Barefu clan and Namukongo of the same clan. Based on the uniqueness of their relationship with the Batukuika clan (their relationship was such that they could indulge in all manner of talk and exchanges with the Batukuika clansmen without causing any offence or embarrassment) they were allowed to preside over the meeting. Hence, it was that the members of other clans (present) such as the Buchema, Babulo, Bameme and the Bakhwami who, under ordinary circumstances, would have conducted the proceedings were passed over. And so, passing the verdict, Kisombe said that the Batukuika were guilty of having upset the ruler, i.e. Mama, thereby causing his regrettable disappearance.

The dispersal of the Ababukusu

After the above meeting had ended, all the clans which were living in Bukusu (Bukusu hill?) gradually dispersed from there and moved to Khachong'a hill where they sojourned for a short while before moving on to Bubuya hill. At that time Bubuya was inhabited by a number of tribes (clans) including the Babuya, Bayemba, Balako (Bok), and the Baafu. When the original group earlier on dispersed from Bukaya (see above), the above enumerated clans (and tribes), under the leadership of Sanjamolu, went straight to Bubuya hill whereas the other group led by Mama went to Bukusu (hill).

The Ababukusu's sojourn at Bubuya

The Ababukusu lived on Bubuya hill for many years during which they greatly increased in population and wealth. Consequent upon this prosperity, on one occasion there was an argument between the Babuya and the Bayemba clansmen as to who were the richer (in cattle)! And so it was agreed that both parties should go and pour some milk on the top of the Bubuya hill and that the party whose milk would flow right down into the surrounding grazing fields would be the winner, i.e. and therefore the richer. Accordingly, the Bayemba poured out theirs but it did not flow down into the fields!

Next, the Babuya poured out theirs and it flowed right down into the surrounding grazing fields! Therefore, the Bayemba were beaten. As a result, the Bayemba in disgust moved away and left the hill to the Babuya. Sanjamolu and his Babuya now occupied the hill and became known as the "Babuya Basikulu" i.e. the Babuya of the hill. Under their leader Mulomj the Bayemba and certain other clans migrated to a certain hill, which they named Buyemba

The Sojourn at Bubuya and Buyemba

The Ababukusu lived on these hills for many years during which they greatly increased in population (and became superior in numbers to the other communities in the area?). Among these other communities there were people who came from Ebusamia (Samia), Ebunyole (Bunyole), and from Bukholi (Bukoli/Busoga) However, they were all known as "Babukusu" because they all (i.e. including the Babukusu proper) came (to the district) the same way when they left Bukusu (hill?). The Basamia joined them because their female ancestor (ancestors) belonged to the Bayemba clan of the Bubukusu

The dispersal of the Babukusu from Bubuya and Buyemba

As the Babukusu continued to live peacefully on the Bubuya and Buyemba hills with above-mentioned clans, one day they suddenly came under attack by the Bamia Bapala (Teso) under their leader called Okuti. This war was big and very fierce! The Babukusu were driven out of their lands and fled across the River Malaba (Lwakhakha) where they were received by Wakhulunya, the son of Mama, who had built there a walled village after he had separated from his people in Bukusu (see above).

Wakhulunya belonged to the same circumcision group as his father. Like his father, too he had some following. When he migrated from Bukusu (hill?), he crossed the River Malaba and went straight to Ebwanyi (unlike the later migrants who sojourned

for a while on the Bubuya and Buyemba hills). Wakhulunya's son called Namunyulubunda was circumcised in his new village; he belonged to the Kolongolo circumcision group. Hence the origin of the song: "Kulongolo of Ebwayi who ate an elephant while he (it?) walked on."

At that time, Wakhulunya was like his father Maina. He gathered all the clans (and tribes) whom the Teso had driven from Bubuya and Buyemba. As they (the people) increased and became many, more and more walled villages were built all over the Bwayi (Ebwayi) hill. They lived there for very many years; even the Kolongolo and the Kikwameti age-groups were circumcised there.

The settlement at Ebwayi

During their stay at Ebwayi, there were a number of big clans whose ancestors came from Ebunyole and Ebusamia and which specialised in different arts. Some specialised in building forts but others were herbalists and rain-doctors with ability to control the falling of hailstones. A few of them were basombi (?) known as the "Nyasi Yabene" and the Bamwaya.

As time went on, the people increased and became so many that, they began to disperse gradually. Some of them hived off and went to Mwiala : among others, they comprise the Batakhwe Bakisiayi, Bamuda, Bameme Bakhurarwa, and the Bakhone. The leader of these people was called Mango. When these particular communities migrated from Bubuya earlier on, they went straight to Mwiala; they did not first go to Bwayi

Mango arrives at Mwiala

Mango (himself) was the leader of the clans already named above. When they moved from Bubuya, these clans went straight to Mwiala; they did not pass through Bwayi. Though Mango was the omukasa of these people, he was uncircumcised. Nevertheless, his two sons, Malaba and Wanyanja were circumcised at the same time as Namunyulubunda and belonged to the Kolongolo age group.

A snake at Mwiala

Now, there was a very dangerous snake at Mwiala, which killed many people and animals. One day that snake killed Malaba, Mango's son and, shortly afterwards, it killed another son called Wanyanja! When Mango saw that the snake had killed his favourite children, he was extremely grieved. Then, as he was still helpless and thinking of what to do, the Barwa urged him to kill the snake.

Accordingly, Mango went into the pit where the snake lived and there waited for its return. As it came back, and was just entering into the pit, he quickly cut its head with one big thrust! Therefore, he killed it as the Barwa had egged him on.

And when Wakhulunya heard of what Mango had done at Mwiala, (he was so pleased that) he began singing thus: "*Obuyu buyo, wowo haa, wowo!*" Afterwards Wakhulunya told Mango: "I (now) recognise that you are truly an *omukasa*. However, there is one thing more for you to do. You have already shown your courage by killing the snake, which terrified everybody. Now, however, you should pluck up courage and get circumcised." Therefore, everybody urged Mango to be circumcised, which he actually did.

His grandson was also circumcised at the same time. And because of Mango's fame, many people claim they belong to his circumcision age-group! Mango's circumcision age group was called the Kikumeti. However, because he was an elderly man, he was grouped together with his age-mate Wakhulunya. That is why they (Babukusu) sing:

“Our (practice of) circumcision which Mango initiated is very painful (manly); Yes, (this is) our ancient initiation. Which originated at Mwalie in Mango's country.”

After Mango was circumcised, he begot two sons called Mubukusu and Mundu. Therefore, the Babukusu of Bwayi and those of Mwiala lived for many years and became very many.

The merger with the Mwalie people

At the same time that the Babukusu were living at Bwayi (Ebwayi) and at Mwiala, a group of about twenty-eight (other) clans were living at Mwalie (in Malikisi). So that the Babukusu often saw smoke rising on the Mwalie hill. They also used to see the fire, which the local inhabitants kindled there. These strangers also laid snares to trap their enemies in the trenches surrounding their forts and, in addition, cut up and ate one another! The Babukusu therefore called them “Barwa”

The Babukusu were extremely anxious to discover who these people were. They therefore sent Kitimule to the village of Wetayi of the Bakitang'a clan to go and discover the truth about them. He stayed there (at Mwalie) for some time and then returned to Mwiala. On his return, he told his fellow Babukusu that those strangers “are not Barwa. They are one of our people who migrated from Mbayi!

We have a common language with them; when I was there recently we understood each other perfectly well”. Afterwards Kitimule married a girl of the Mwalie people. He then told the Mwalie people that their cannibalistic habits were extremely abominable. And that was the origin of the proverb: “(Go and) ask Kitimule who was the first man to venture into Buyumbu,” i.e. the country of the Bayumbu of Mwalie.

Since then, the Babukusu never referred to the Mwalie people as the “Barwa”; instead, they called them “Buyumbu”. Their clans comprise the Mweya, Malicha, Makhu~li, Balukulu, Bubichu, Namusonge, Nambengele, Musamba, Nayumbu, Kimungongi, Nyangali, Muchalia, Kamutebi, Saniaka, Mukusi, Mukobolo, Chambachi, Muhongo, Buhubwayi, Bameywa, Bamakhaflga, Butulu, Bungachi, Basiaya, Bahafisi, Baabiya and the Bamarakaru. Kibulo and Wambeye were their leading *bakasa*.

The migration from Ebwayi and Mwalie

The Bamia pursued the Babukusu and attacked them at Mwiala. After that they also moved on to Mwalie when they saw that the Bamia Bapala (apparently different from the other Bamia) had driven the Babukusu from Bubuya and Buyemba. The Bamia therefore (again) resumed their pursuit of the Babukusu.

During their stay at Mwalie, the Babukusu community began to disintegrate into quasi_independent clans with their own *bakasa*. However, Namunyulubunda - like his father Wakhulunya - had overall control on them. The Bamia war forced them to

abandon their settlements at Ebwayi, Mwiala and at Mwalie and to flee over to Kitingia.

The Kitingia settlement

During the Babukuss's sojourn at Kitingia, they became more aggressive and warlike. Their settlements spread out as far as Emabusi in Malikisi, Mabanga and to the Nzoia (River). They also built very many forts, each with its own *omukasa*. Thus, the various clans (of the Babukusu) lived together, in big groups, in the numerous forts.

They lived there for a very long time. Indeed, it was so long that the Bakananachi and the Bakinyikewi age groups were even circumcised there! They spread out as far as Chebuyusi, Konyelo, Chebaywa, Miendo, Chekulo, and to Kitumi. Their forts and settlements extended to our present homes. Indeed, they lived at Kitingia for a very long time.

The migration to Bunyala (Port Victoria)

Because of the war which was waged (on the Babukusu) by the Bamia under Oyata and Murwe Lipopo, the Omukikwameti, Omukananachi, and the Mukinyikewi circumcision age groups fled to Bunyala. However, not all Babukusu people fled to Bunyala; some went to Ebumaraki (Marachi). His war did not last long at any one time. Indeed, it was more of a periodic raids affair. So that immediately the Bamia invaders retreated, the Babukusu fugitives in Marachi and Bunyala returned to their villages. However, the Babukusu who fled to Bunyala experienced great hardships. The Banyala took their wives and gave them to their own unmarried men! On the other hand, the people who fled to Bumaraki (Marachi) were well treated.

[N.B. Formerly the Batachoni were called the "Bayumbu" by the Babukusu]

Mukite Omumtilu (of the Bamutilu clan?) Mukite son of Nameme beat the drum of the Babukusu at Mundoli and also in Bunyala, Busamia (Samia), Bumaraki (Marachi), Masaba, and in Bunyolo, i.e. Luoland, to summon back all the Babukusu war fugitives. Mukite himself and Pepela had fled to Kabras during the Bamia war. Mukite beat the drum saying: "(I appeal to you) Babukusu people to return to your country; do not leave your country in ruins!" The only clans, which had not fled the country during the Bamia war, were the Bameme, Bakamukongi, Balonja, Batwikwika, Omwala, and the Bayemba.

The Mwiyeenga settlement

There lived a very provocative man in Mwiyeenga called Simaweta Lumuli of the Basamo clan. This man was extremely powerful. He had a number of grown-up Sons who used to deride the Babukusu because of their (extended navels). For their part, the Babukusu used to ridicule them because of their big ears. This misunderstanding arose from the fact that these people used to rob the Babukusu of their killings.

On one occasion, they even robbed a person called Watayi of the Bayundo clan of his cow! It was this last straw, which caused the big fight with them. In this war the people of Simaweta were defeated and driven across the River Nzoia. Simaweta himself was also driven over the Nzoia. In those days, Simaweta's people were still known as "Bayumbu"; their current name of "Batachoni" had not yet come into use.

The Babukusu invade Bunyala (Port Victoria)

As Mukite beat the drum (see above), the Babukusu invaded Bunyala because the Banyala had robbed their fugitives of their wives and some of them were missing. The Babukusu therefore attacked them and recovered some of their children who had remained there (when others returned). One of the Babukusu elders called Silibwa, a prophet, then told the Banyala: "It is apparent to me that your children (begotten with the Babukusu's wives) will become Babukusu", i.e. the children would belong to the mothers' legal husbands in Bukusu and not to the Banyala ones. From then on, many of them came back to Bukusu; they are still here to this very day. They comprise the Baelifuma, the Bakwanwachi, and many others.

The achievements of Mukite son of Nameme

After Mukite had called back the Babukusu, he embarked on training them in the art of warfare and imbued them with courage and manliness. He also discouraged the habit of fleeing in the face of enemy attacks.

Under him, the Babukusu built more forts. They also started manufacturing spears, bells, knives and hats (headgear?) and clubs. In addition, they started decorating themselves (when going to fight). They were further trained in the art of repelling the enemy and cowing them. They practised all sorts of warfare such as the arts of jumping high up into the air in the battlefield, of self-defence in the battle, and of guerilla warfare. Finally, they were trained in the proper way to handle weapons when in action, and in many other skills. Thus under Mukite the Babukusu received tremendous military training.

After this Mukite sub-divided his army into two contingents, the Elamali and the Engetuti. The former was the advance party, which went into the battle first. On the other hand, the Engetuti was at the rear; it went into action when the Elamali grew weary or when the enemy pursued them. In either case, the Engetuti reinforced the Elamali and formed a barrier against the advancing enemy. It was because of this that the Babukusu warriors never appeared weary.

When Mukite saw that his warriors were now ready for action, he led them, first, against the Bawanga and defeated them, and, secondly against the Banyifwa Bachalwo (Ugenya Luo?) and defeated them again.

Mukite's reorganisation of the army

Mukite reorganised his army into three contingents, the Elamali, Engetuti, and the Bayoti. (As already mentioned) Elamali was the advance group which led the attack on the enemy and the Engetuti were the rear contingent. On the other hand, the Bayoti were the scouts and intelligence men whose duty it was to report on the enemy's position and movements before the actual fighting took place.

At one time, the Babukusu attacked the Basamia and defeated them. It was also at this very time that the Babukusu acquired a new method of fighting. This entailed attacking the enemy by night. The Barwa Bakinisu taught them this kind of warfare because they always lost whenever they fought the Bamia in daytime. The Barwa told

them: “You cannot win day battles against the Bamia. To be successful you must fight them by night.” This was so because the Bamia were very good at daytime battles.

After some time the Babukusu attacked Mumia’s *lukoba* (fort) and killed an elder called Murwe. Wabomba of the Bachechemwile clan was the leader of the invasion of Murwe’s *lukoba*. Since then the Babukusu built some of their forts (*chingoba*) at Musibale in Wamumanga’s village, at Tulumba in Namunyu’s village, and at Nandule’s (Namunyu son of Nandule?).

Later still, there was another war (this time of an entirely new type). Mukisu (Lufwalula) of the Bayemba clan went to see his relations at Masaba and found one of his relations of the Batikane clan with some arrows. Mukisu brought back a few arrows when he returned home. With the aid of some of the Batikane people, the Babukusu soon began to manufacture their own arrows and thereby increased their small stock. In addition, the Batikane trained the Babukusu in the art of bow-and-arrow warfare until they became adept at it.

Opata’s War

Opata of the Bamia warned Mukisu (Lufwalula) of the Bayemba clan that unless his people were obedient, he would invade his *lukoba* and teach them a lesson! He told him to get ready for war in seven days time. Therefore, before the sixth day came and therefore before the Bamia’s invasion, the Babukusu went and cleared the wells from which the enemy would get their water (to quench their thirst) in the heat of the battle. Then they placed the poison, which Mukisu got from the Batikane (Bagishu) at Masaba right at the bottom of the springs.

Only three wells, which were for their own use, were not poisoned. Finally, they smeared the rest of the poison on their arrows saying: “When the battle becomes fierce and they rush to quench their thirst, let them drink the poison and die. Moreover, whoever shall be hit by the arrows, let them also die. Only thus will they learn a lesson.”

On the appointed day Opata arrived with his army and fierce fighting began. Then the Babukusu began fighting with their bows and arrows. (They were so successful that) whenever the Bamia fighters were even merely slightly scratched by the arrows they died almost instantly. Moreover, those of them who became tired and thirsty therefore dashed to the fountains died there, i.e. having drunk the poisoned water. That day the Babukusu thoroughly defeated the Bamia. They recovered their country, which is present-day Malakisi Location, as far as the River Lwakhakha (Malaba); even the present location of Teso (which formerly belonged to the Babukusu) was also recovered.

It was then that a Teso elder called Kimaru said, “I either return to Soroti (whence we came) or we eat a dog!” i.e. make peace. Nevertheless, a Mubukusu (singular of Babubukusu) elder called Musamali of the Batwikwika clan answered and said: “There can be no question of eating a dog. The Bamia have (always) given us a very hard time. We shall fight on until we (completely) defeat them.” Hence the origin of the Babukusu’s song: “Go and ask the sparrow (*nakholo*); I brushed his (its) teeth.”

The reason why Kimaru did not after all go back to Soroti was the fact that he was married to Nang'oni daughter of Malemo of the Bakiabi clan. That was why he was given hospitality. He was also married to Namumbia daughter of Tototo of the Babulo clan. His first wife (Nang'oni) came from Khamukoya but Namumbia came from Kikwechi.

Life at Khamukoya and Namubila

Malemo of the Bakiabi clan and Chemaao of the Bakolati clan were the *bakasa* at that time. They were very famous. A little farther off fighting was endemic. This was yonder in the *lukoba* of Wabwobi, of the Bamuyonga clan, and a certain *omukasa* called Wambeo son of Wanjo of the Basitiyu clan... cattle disease was the reason for their abandoning their *lukoba*. Then they crossed the Lwakhakha and came over to Emasaba to the villages of Nandabwa of the Bakhoma clan, Kinikina of the Bamulika clan and of Maumo of the Batemulani clan. Therefore, the Bakoyonjo returned to their *lukoba* at Mungachi. The people who crossed over to Emasaba are still living there to this very day. They are known as "Bamasaba"

The migration of the Babukusu from Mungachi was because the Balaku (Bok) lived right in their midst. The Balaku exploited the situation by killing their people. Hence the migration of the Babukusu from Mungachi to Emasaba and thence to Bukusu.

One day some Babukusu people went to visit their relations in Emasaba and a few of them were killed. Those who were killed included Munialo Musisie, Lubisia Weng'ang'a, and Wakweyika Omumuki. The death of these baiwsa together with the stealing of the cattle belonging to Nandoli son of Sioya of the Batukuika clan, made the Babultusu go to war (with the Bagishu?).

Their leading warriors were Wachonge of the Bamaina clan, Kamase of the Bachuna clan, and Kakasarwe of the Bawa clan. The Basawa clan was under seclusion. Their war leaders included Mamai son of Waina alias (?) Wachiye Kisielo, Khwatenga Namusole, Maalafu Chebukosi, Masibo Walubuka, Ngubesi Mulwele, and Munialo Kimungogi. Among the Bayoti (intelligence men) were Kimameti Kimereti, and Likhomba of the Bakamukongi clan.

Their (war) prophets were Wachonge Mutiambu and Kitwangayi of the Bamalicha clan. (It was their duty to tell their people when the time was propitious for going to war.) One of them told them that they should not go to war because he had "seen" women walking naked.

Another diviner called Soida told them that when going to attack the enemy, they should approach their forts via the Kilalia route to avoid facing the sun as that would bring them ill luck. Yet another diviner called Situma Wachiye of the Babulo clan said that from his art he could see that he was standing knee high in blood! He suggested, therefore, that they put off the attack and return home. However, Nakhosi rejected this and told him: "We do not agree with you; we shall go on and fight. As for you, you have grown-up daughters; go back and get rich, (i.e. from the marriage cattle of the daughters). We are soldiers and, therefore, have nothing to do with diviners! We are going to war."

Busiku son of Wangusi

Another war, which the Babukusu fought, arose in the following manner. Certain Barwa stole cattle belonging to Nabikubo of the Bamalicha clan from the salt lick place and disappeared scot-free. This encouraged them to come back and try their luck once more. This time they were even accompanied by their girls! They walked past the *lukoba* of Musuya of the Babuya clan and crossed over to Miendo at Wesakania's of the Basomi clan. Then they raided all the *chingoba* of the Babukusu from Bokoli right across into Kiboochi and took many cattle.

They next went to the *chingoba* of Kati, of the Bakwangwa clan, and Webere of the Bahengele clan, killed some of the villagers, and took away all the cattle. When they went to Chekula they found the cattle-boma closed. So they passed on to the *lukoba* of Wangasi of the Bachemwile clan where they slept outside the village. Meantime, the Babukusu were pursuing them; they too camped for the night outside the same *lukoba*! Another group of the Babukusu was also on the way coming. Other Babukusu contingents camped for the night at Mwamisi's, an Omubichachi clansman, at Kokonya's the son of Makhombe of the Bawayila clan, and at Sibia Kisabuli's of the Baliuli clan at Buhola.

Early next morning, the warriors were in full battle dress, shining. Then, as the Barwa were making a hole in the wall to get into the *lukoba*, they saw the Babukusu warriors. The Barwa immediately abandoned their attempt to get in saying: "Let us first drive off (?) these people who have come to rescue them and then we shall come back and get into the village and take the booty; there are (many) cattle in the *lukoba*!" But the Babukusu warriors were reinforced by more men from Wayongo's at Sirave, from Walela's, and from Khwatengi's. Others came from Munyefwe's *lukoba* at Lurende, under the leadership of Masibo, from Wabuchune, under the leadership of Ndala and his father Totolela of the Basefu clan, and from Sanua's. Therefore, they all came to fight the Barwa who had taken their herds; however, they found the other warriors who camped in the village the previous night already fighting when they arrived.

When the Babukusu killed two of their people, the Barua were terrified and said that they were hard pressed. However, among the Babukusu warriors there were two people, Munialo son of Kokonya of the Bayila clan and Kitui son of Kisachi of the Bamalicha clan, who understood Luiwa, i.e. the language of the Barua. These two told the Babukusu that the Barwa were already exhausted. When the Babukusu heard this, they surrounded the Barwa on the left and right hand and drove them off into the Kuywa river where many of them perished as the river was full. Indeed so many of them died that their bodies formed a bridge upon which the Babukusu crossed over to bring back their cattle!

The Babukusu drove the Barwa as far as the *lukoba* of Munyikanya of the Bangachi clan. The Batachoni who were still known at that time as Bayumbu also came out and fought them, driving them up onto the hill and killing many of them. Some of the fleeing Barwa fell into the pits in which the Bayumbu trapped their game. This war was known as Wangusi's war.

It was after this that Babukusu warriors launched attacks on the Balaku under Chongo. Members of the Omunyange, Omumaina, and of the Omukinyikewi age

groups who had stayed behind at Wangusi's because they were exhausted now went to fight at Chonge's.

[N.B. 1. The Babukusu spoke Lumasaba when they left Bukaya. 2. When the Babukusu came to Bubuya they found there the Babuya and the Bayemba who spoke Olunyole.]

The third journey

This was the third time the Babukusu came into their present country of Bukusu from Mbayi. When they migrated from Mbayi they journeyed through the country lying to the left hand of Mount Masaba (Elgon) to Kinyurusi where they sojourned for some time. Later again they left Kinyurusi and went to Sengeri and thence to Kalembe and settled there for a short period. Then again, they moved on to Chebutumeti where they also lived for some time.

Owing to the endemic warfare in the area, the Babukusu moved on once more, this time to Njoro. Later still, they migrated to Sibwani. After that, the Bakoyonja (local inhabitants of the Kitale and Siboti area) now scattered in various directions because of raids and warfare. His people having thus been driven from their former country between Kitale and Siboti and scattered to the four winds, Sikolia the ruler of the Bakoyoni fled to the Babukusu for refuge.

Later the Babukusu left Siboti and journeyed in various directions. Some dispersed to Naitiri, Kamuruniba, Saisambo, Mbakalo, Kamukuywa, Chesamisi, Nakalila, Ndibisi, Mwikhupo, and to Webuye. Then again, turning further to the right, they went to Kumutiong to Mwayi and to Teremi. Leaving Teremi again, they turned further to the left and moved on to Kituni, and thence to Bilongo Miendo, to Bokoli, to Chekulo, to Nalondo, and on to Kibichori, to Kabuchai, to Mwibale to Kabula, to Sengeteti, to Mayania, to Kitinda, and to Wekelekha.

Continuing journeying, the migrants crossed the River Lwakhakha (Malaba). Some of them then turned further to the left and, continuing in the same direction, journeyed on to Ebusamia and to Bukhayo. When some of those who went to Ebusantia later returned to Bukusu under the leadership of a man called Muhali, they spoke a strange dialect.

The people who accompanied Muhali are now known as the Bamwalie Muhali' mother belonged to their clan. Gradually some people dispersed to Mwiala, to Bwayi, to Bubuya, and to Buyemba and to Khachonga. In those days, people were very few. This was due to the prevalence of smallpox and lukhunene (a peculiar disease whereby the victim became obese) which killed countless people as there was no medicine.

[N.B When the migrants went to Embayi (see above), they did not all later return to Bukusu; some went to Buganda, to Busamia, to Bulagoli (Maragoli), and to Isukha. Those who migrated to Isukha are known there as the Abamironje, the Bakusi, the Abamuhali, and the Abamaalia". Those who went to Maragoli are known as the Basamiaka, Bayonga, Abamasero, and the Abasachi. Those who migrated to Tiriki are known there as the Babambo and the Abalukhobo and the ones who went to Bunyore are now called the Babayi. These then are the people (whose ancestors)

separated from the main group and dispersed during the journey from Embayi to Bukusu round the Mount Masaba (Elgon)].

The migration from Embayi

In Embayi there lived a people called “Wanekhupa Saria Lueni”, i.e. the Abyssinians. There were also others known as “Bamalele”. These two fought with the Babukusu. At that time the Babukusu were known as the Basilikwa Basengeli. The other tribes, which lived in Embayi, were the Kamasya, the Elgeyo, the Marakwet, the Turkana, the Kamuliungu, the Suku, the Bukisila, and the Kromojo (Karamojong).

The Babukusu pulled out of Embayi because they feared fighting with the Abyssinians because of their superior weapons - the firearms. When the Babukusu migrated from Embayi, one group followed a route which lay further to the left of Mount Masaba but the other one followed the one which lay further to the right of the mountain.

The former party eventually set-tied in the district between the Nzoia (River) and Mwaie but the latter, after many years (of circuitous travelling) eventually went to Bukaya from where, as already said, the Babukusu came into Bukusu. It was there (Bukaya) that Maina gathered the Babukusu and led them to Bukusu (hill) from where they later moved on to Bubuya, to Buyemba, to Khachonga, to Bwayi, and to Mwiala. They also encountered the Mwalie people who migrated with them to Kitingia, to Surungai, to Mundoli, and thence to Chebuyusi, to Naitiri, to Mahatuma, to Mbakalo, to Kiminini, to Siboti, and on to Kisawayi.

[N.B: Some of the old settlements of the Babukusu are in the Kitale area in Sibwabi, and at Kamuliungu (Suku). The above was their third journey (into Bukusu from Embayi). During this period, Mount Masaba was literally surrounded with the old settlements of the Babukusu.]

Source: Gideon S Were; Western Kenya, Historical Texts, EALB, 1967